

*Citation for published version:*

Curle, S 2018, 'Book review: English-Medium Instruction in Japanese Higher Education: Policy, Challenges and Outcomes, A. Bradford, H. Brown (Eds.), Multilingual Matters (2017), xxiii + 300pp', *System*, vol. 74, pp. 225-227.

*Publication date:*  
2018

*Document Version*  
Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication](#)

**University of Bath**

## **Alternative formats**

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact:  
[openaccess@bath.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@bath.ac.uk)

### **General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

*This is an author generated .pdf for this book review accepted and published by SYSTEM Journal in April 2018. For the definitive publisher's version, please see SYSTEM Journal, published online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2018.04.006> and in print in the 2018 Volume 74, June 2018, Pages 225-227.*

*To cite this review:*

**Curle, S.** (2018). Book review. [Review of the book *English-Medium Instruction in Japanese Higher Education: Policy, Challenges and Outcomes*, by A. Bradford, H. Brown (Eds)]. *System*, 74, 225–227. doi: 10.1016/j.system.2018.04.006

**English-Medium Instruction in Japanese Higher Education: Policy, Challenges and Outcomes. A. Bradford, H. Brown (Eds). Multilingual Matters (2017). xxiii + 300pp.**

I have been researching EMI in Japan since my Master's degree in 2013. I looked at a trilingual international professor's strategic use of code-switching. My DPhil research is investigating what the main predictors are of professor and students' attitudes towards EMI. I am familiar with the Japanese context and have witnessed how the eruption of EMI seems to have caught everyone off guard. This is also a personal matter for me as I have two, largely monolingual, Japanese godsons who will one day face the same challenges faced by all Japanese university students in Japan. As a result, Bradford and Brown's edited book piqued my interest as it is the first volume focused solely on Japan. As research on EMI in Japan is still in its infant stages I hoped to read more large-scale empirical research, nevertheless, contributors do provide valuable contextual descriptions, theoretical contributions, small-scale qualitative study findings, and insights from personal experience.

A look back into the history of Japanese education policy highlighted to me a tangential relationship between EMI and money. Bradford and Brown (p. 7) note the key role that the Japan Business Federation plays in education policy making. Motivated by a shrinking domestic market, Japanese businesses are calling on universities to foster graduates that are equipped with the linguistic skills and the cultural capital to operate in a global trading arena. This lack of graduate global competitiveness is reinforced by Hashimoto (p. 15). What the authors lack to explain is why such competitiveness has not yet been fostered in the last 10 years of EMI expansion.

Another more obvious link between money and EMI is highlighted by Mulvey (p. 40). He illuminates a thought-provoking evolution of a power-shift between the education ministry and universities. As bids for government funding have become competitive, the ministry has gained more control of education quality assurance. He then, I think, makes a noteworthy observation that those who have gained funds to implement EMI, are often those who have voiced the greatest criticism of it. Quite an obvious comment, but the first I have seen in the literature to draw this parallel.

Conceptualising EMI as something to be bought or sold is directly questioned by Birchley (p. 131). She asks whether EMI itself should be considered to be a commodity, and at what price it should be sold. I relate this to *value* and would add the sub-question: would the Japanese public/market value such a commodity? In fact, would an international market value such a commodity? Heigham (p. 161) states that international students are ‘valuable currency’ but underlines the fact (p. 177) that in 2014 70% of international students turned down an offer from the University of Tokyo. This begs the question, has EMI attracted as many international students as policymakers planned? These are questions the authors neglect to ask, discuss, or investigate.

As in most EMI literature (see Macaro et al., 2018), the theme of internationalisation is found throughout this text. Hashimoto (p. 17) comments that this is operationalised as increasing the number of international students and academics in Japan. This creates what Takagi (p. 52) calls an ‘internationalisation-at-home’ situation. As long as EMI courses are open to Japanese students, Yamamoto and Ishikura (p. 84) agree that this provides a space for Japanese and international students to interact. I wonder whether such interaction happens organically within an EMI class, or whether a change in pedagogy is needed to foster such interaction. Kuwamura (p. 279) appeals to faculty to ‘hone their discipline-specific pedagogical skills’. It is not very clear what this means, but he seems to connect this to his call for creating further ‘opportunities for intercultural communication’. Haswell (p. 159) also calls for more of this interaction.

A lack of interaction between international and Japanese students was found by Heigham (p. 166) to a point of students feeling that university members did not actually want them to be there. This extreme pessimistic point of view was echoed throughout Section 4: The student and faculty experience. I was expecting to hear the voices of Japanese students and faculty in this section but instead heard from mostly internationals (Haswell, Heigham, and Susser). Although the importance of this view is not questioned, I think that Japanese views were underrepresented.

However, it is not denied that universities face great challenges when implementing EMI. Again, focusing on international students, Ota and Horiuchi highlight the challenges of administrative processes. Nevertheless, I would contest their call for a 'universal accepted standard for admissions' (p. 111) as each university has its own unique culture and practices, and course requirements. In addition, while I recognize the importance of university preparedness for EMI, I do question the usefulness of highly critical accounts based on personal experience (Poole, p. 91), which offer few suggestions of improvement and border on Japanese stereotyping.

Stereotyping in different forms comes through in this collection. From an international perspective, Susser (p. 195) discusses his experience of the assumption made that because he is a native English speaker, and an English language teacher, he is qualified to teach content through English. I am not sure how relevant this '*native speak fallacy*' (Canagarajah, 2009) is today in Japan, but it certainly highlights the issue of a persistent preference for 'standard' varieties of English. Haswell's (p. 153) findings highlight this same preference by Asian students in Japan.

It is not just the stereotyping of native English speakers/varieties that is featured in this volume. Shimauchi (p. 192) appears to equate Japanese students' [international awareness] with Japanese students [perceiving internationals as *other*], drawing on Hashimoto's (2013) notion of Japan versus '*Other*'. While I do not doubt her findings, it does concern me that such notions get repeated quite haphazardly in the EMI literature. In my own research, when I asked Japanese students for their opinions related to concepts such as '*Othering*' or being '*Inward looking*' they reported that they found these notions offensive. It is not to say that if such notions arise in research findings they should not be reported. However, the emphasis it is given in reporting research findings needs to be balanced with its relevance in answering the original research questions. I do query the usefulness of such conceptualisations in terms of the applicability to enhance EMI teaching and learning.

To be fair, it is not all doom and gloom. Yamamoto and Ishikura (p. 71) offer the most optimistic outlook in this volume by far. They describe first-hand experience of how student feedback, careful planning, and faculty support contribute to a successful EMI programme. Horie (p. 212) also gives excellent guidance based on her EMI faculty guidebook. She provides six key principles of advice for EMI practitioners, focusing not only on language proficiency training but creating an environment which fosters intercultural learning. Other practical tips for successful EMI programmes are given by: Iyobe and Li (p. 236) - foster collaboration between the language and content teachers, McKinley (p. 248) -

promote collaboration between different EMI programmes, and Kunioshi and Nakakoji (p. 260), improve faculty and students' academic English skills for classroom communication. Although these tips and guidelines will surely be highly appreciated by EMI practitioners, one element missing throughout the entire book is an attempted definition of the ideal 'successful EMI programme'.

I think we are all striving to make EMI a success. McKinley (p. 238) states quite poignantly that we need to convince students of the value of English as a *medium* of study rather than an *object* of study. As researchers, EMI is our 'object' of study. Bradford and Brown (p. 287) pose a complex but essential question at the heart of all of this: what are the true aims and objectives of EMI in Japan? It seems to me that this is what we are all still trying to figure out, and so the research has to continue. Kuwamura (*throughout the entire chapter*) provides an excellent overview of both the ethical and practical questions facing Japan if EMI is to become permanently implemented in HE. Drawing on an extensive body of literature, he poses astute questions that could be transformed into research questions for future research on EMI in Japan.

To conclude, although this book does have a rather pessimistic overtone, it provides excellent summaries of the history of EMI in Japan, in-depth insights from insiders, and gives some really practical guidance for EMI practitioners, something that is lacking in other EMI literature.

## References

- Canagarajah, A. S. (2009). Interrogating the 'Native Speaker Fallacy': Non-Linguistic Roots, Non-Pedagogical Results. In G. Braine (Ed.), *Non-native Educators in English Language Teaching*. Routledge.
- Hashimoto, K. (2013). 'English-Only', but Not a Medium-of-Instruction Policy: The Japanese Way of Internationalising Education for Both Domestic and Overseas Students. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 14(1), 16–33.
- Macaro, E., Curle, S., Pun, J., An, J., & Dearden, J. (2018). A Systematic Review of English Medium Instruction in Higher Education. *Language Teaching*, 51(1).

Samantha Curle  
*Department of Education, The University of Oxford, 15 Norham Gardens, OX2 6PY, Oxford*  
Email address: [samanthamcurle@gmail.com](mailto:samanthamcurle@gmail.com)